CLEAN COPY OF THE ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A 3D model is retrieved from a database based on similarity calculations between a 3D model specified as a retrieval key and 3D models stored in the database. In the specification process, a 3D model having a hierarchial structure made of a plurality of subelements is displayed and a user is allowed to specify a subelement of a 3D model by designating one of the plurality of subelements displayed, the user being able to change the level of the hierarchy to which the specification is made with a successive operation.

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IN THE ABSTRACT:

Please amend the Abstract as follows. A clean copy of the amended Abstract is enclosed.

A 3D model ~~similar to the specified 3D model~~ is retrieved from a ~~plurality of 3D models stored as objects to be retrieved in a~~ database based on similarity calculations between a ~~by using various feature values calculated from the selected 3D model. At that time, when at least one of the selected 3D model and a subelement which is a part of the selected~~ 3D model [[is]] specified as a retrieval key and 3D models stored in the database. In the specification process, a 3D model having a hierarchial structure made of a plurality of subelements is displayed and a user is allowed to specify a subelement of a 3D model by designating one of the plurality of subelements displayed, the user being able to change the level of the hierarchy to which the specification is made with a successive operation.~~, the feature values of the subelements included in the 3D model specified as the retrieval key and data on information about the relationship between the subelements are acquired. In addition, the feature values of the subelements included in the 3D models stored as objects to be retrieved in the database and data on information about the relationship between the subelements are acquired. Then, the similarity between the 3D models to be retrieved and the 3D model acting as retrieval key is calculated using the acquired feature values about the subelements to be retrieved, the acquired data on information about the relationship between the subelements, the acquired feature values about the subelements of the retrieval key, and the acquired data on information about the relationship between the subelements. On the basis of the calculated similarity, the result of retrieval is displayed.~~

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